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claims pto

I. ellis

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1                   1/     A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for  
2 the purchase of a product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller,  
3 comprising:  
4                   receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by  
5 buyers of the group;  
6                   forming a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based  
7 upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;  
8                   sending the collective request to the at least one seller;  
9                   receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at  
10 least one seller;  
11                  notifying an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation price;  
12                  receiving purchase authorization from at least one buyer in the group to buy  
13 the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

2.     (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the agent entity  
is one of a buyer in the group or the group.

3.     (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
collecting payment information from the at least one buyer in the group  
from whom the purchase authorization was received; and  
sending the payment information to the seller associated with the sale.

4.     (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein the payment information is  
in the form of a credit card number for the at least one buyer in the group who is  
interested in buying the product/service.

5.     The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at  
least another seller; and  
notifying the agent entity of the received another suggested price quotation.

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6. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for purchasing a product/service by a group of buyers from a seller of a plurality of sellers, comprising:

receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by buyers of the group;

forming a collective request for purchase of the product/service based upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;

sending the collective request to a plurality of sellers;

receiving by an agent entity a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the a plurality of the sellers;

automatically providing by the agent entity each received suggested price quotation to at least a plurality of the sellers for review, wherein the agent entity is an agent of the group of buyers;

receiving by the agent entity another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at least one of the plurality of sellers;

receiving purchase authorization to complete a sale from at least one buyer in the group to buy the product/service from any seller that has provided a suggested price quotation for the product/service.

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7. The method of claim 1 in which said computer is configured to

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restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

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8. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for purchasing a product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller, comprising:

- verifying that a plurality of buyers in the group satisfy a predetermined requirements list that requires a plurality of buyers in the group to have a common employer, wherein the common employer is independent of the seller;

- receiving into the computer buyer requests to purchase the product/service by verified buyers of the group;

- forming a collective request for purchase of the product/service based upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;

- sending the collective request to the at least one seller;

- receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller;

- receiving into the computer buyer requests to purchase the product/service by verified buyers of the group;

- forming a collective request for purchase of the product/service based upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;

- sending the collective request to the at least one seller;

- receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller;

- notifying an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation; and

- receiving purchase authorization from at least one verified buyer in the group to buy the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

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9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8 wherein sending the collective request to the at least one seller further comprises a price reduction request for the product/service based on a number of buyers in the group.
10. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein the price reduction request further includes a preexisting group discount rate of the at least one seller.
11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the received suggested price quotation is based on a number of buyers in the group.
12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, further comprising:  
receiving into the computer a group buy setup characteristics data set that includes at least one of price targets for the product/service, buyer deadlines for joining the group, buyer deadlines for submitting purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing the sales transaction.
13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
providing a setup tool that facilitates receiving group buy setup characteristics data that includes at least one of price targets for the product/service, buyer deadlines for joining the group, and buyer deadlines for receiving purchase authorization.
14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the computer is connected to an electronic network and wherein the received requests to purchase the product/service are received over the electronic network.
15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the electronic network is at least one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.
16. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the received requests to purchase the product/service are received in a secured format.

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17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the computer is connected to an electronic network and wherein the received suggested price quotation for the product/service is received over the electronic network.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
providing the agent entity with pre-negotiated prices for the product/service from any seller that has provided a suggested price quotation for the product/service.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein notifying the agent entity of the received suggested price quotation comprises sending a message to the agent entity in a format of at least one of an e-mail message, an Internet immediate message, a voice message, a beeper message, or a facsimile message.

20. A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for the purchase of a product/service from at least one seller, comprising:  
receiving from the at least one seller at least one of an agreed price for the product/service or a price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size;  
receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by buyers, the buyers collectively forming a group;  
monitoring the group to determine if the group has attained the at least one group size; and  
providing payment information to the at least one seller if the group attains the at least one group size.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25, further comprising:  
requesting the at least one seller to honor the at least one of an agreed price for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for the at least one group size.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25, further comprising:  
collecting payment information from buyers in the group who have submitted requests to purchase the product/service.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the payment information is in the form of a credit card number for each buyer of the buyers in the group who are interested in buying the product/service.

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1           24. The method of claim 20, further comprising:  
2           receiving another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at  
3           least another seller; and  
4           notifying at least one buyer in the group of the received another suggested  
5           ~~price quotation~~

25. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer to facilitate a  
sales transaction for purchasing a product/service from a seller, comprising:  
receiving from a seller at least one of an agreed price for the  
product/service or a price reduction for the product/service for at  
least one group size;  
receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by  
buyers, the buyers collectively forming a group, the computer  
configured to receive the requests to purchase the product/service  
after receiving from the at least one seller the agreed price or the  
price reduction;  
monitoring the group to determine if the group has attained the at least  
one group size;  
providing buyer payment information to the seller if the group attains the  
at least one group size;  
automatically providing by the agent entity to a plurality of other sellers  
for review the at least one of an agreed price for the  
product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for  
at least one group size received from the at least one seller, wherein  
the agent entity is independent of the-seller and the plurality of  
other sellers;  
receiving another agreed price or price reduction for the product/service  
from one of the plurality of other sellers; and  
notifying buyers in the group of the received another agreed price.

1           26. The method of claim 20 in which said computer is configured to  
2           restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

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27. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for purchasing a product/service from a seller, comprising:

receiving from at least one seller at least one of an agreed price for the product/service or a price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size;  
receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by prospective buyers;  
verifying that each prospective buyer satisfies a requirements list before including the prospective buyer in a buying group, the requirements list including a requirement that a plurality of buyers in the group have a common employer, wherein the common employer is independent of the seller;  
monitoring the buying group to determine if the buying group has attained the at least one group size; and  
providing payment information to the at least one seller if the group attains the at least one group size.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising:  
receiving into the computer group buy setup characteristics data that includes at least one of buyer deadlines for joining the group, buyer deadlines for submitting purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing the sales transaction.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising:  
providing a setup tool that facilitates receiving group buy setup characteristics data that includes at least one of buyer deadlines for joining the group and buyer deadlines for receiving purchase authorization.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the computer is connected to an electronic network and wherein the received requests to purchase the product/service are received over the electronic network.

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31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the electronic network is at least one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

32. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the received requests to purchase the product/service are received in a secured format.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the computer is connected to an electronic network and wherein the payment information is provided to the at least one seller over the electronic network.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising:  
notifying at least one buyer in the group that the group has attained the at least one group size.

35. (Original) The method of claim 34 wherein the buyer in the group is notified via at least one of an e-mail message, an Internet immediate message, a voice message, a beeper message, and a facsimile message.

36. (Previously Amended) A computer-readable data transmission medium containing a data structure that facilitates a sales transaction with a seller comprising:



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- a first portion that specifies a product/service for purchase by a group comprised of more than one buyer;
- a second portion that specifies a collective request by the group to the purchase of the product/service;
- a third portion that requests price information for the product/service from the seller;
- a fourth portion that specifies a time interval for which the collective request remains active;
- a fifth portion that specifies at least a minimum sales quantity of the product/service for which a price information is requested; and
- a sixth portion that verifies that buyers in the group satisfy a predetermined membership requirement of having a common employer, wherein the common employer is independent of the seller.

37. (Previously Amended) The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 36, further comprising:

- a seventh portion that specifies price information provided by a competing seller of the product/service.

38. (Previously Amended) The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 36, further comprising:

- a seventh portion that specifies a number of buyers in the group.

39. (Previously Amended) The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 36 wherein the first through sixth portions are configured for transmission to the seller in an integral transmission.

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1        40. A computer-readable data transmission medium containing a data  
2 structure that facilitates a sales transaction with a buyer comprising:

3            (a) a first portion that specifies a product/service for which purchase has  
4 been requested by the buyer;

5            (b) a second portion that identifies a group into which the buyer's  
6 purchase request has been joined with other purchase requests for the same  
7 product/service;

8            (c) a third portion that identifies a price quotation for the  
9 product/service received from a seller; and

10           (d) a fourth portion that asks the buyer if the buyer will commit to  
11 purchasing the product/service at the identified price quotation from the seller.

1           41. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 40,  
2 further comprising:

3           (e) a fifth portion that solicits purchase information from the buyer if the  
4 buyer is willing to commit to the purchase of the product/service.

1           42. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 40,  
2 further comprising:

3           (e) a fifth portion that informs the buyer of a time period within which  
4 the buyer must respond or be assumed to have made a purchase decision.

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1 43. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 42  
2 wherein the purchase decision is one of purchasing the product/service or declining to  
3 purchase the product/service.

1 44. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 40  
2 wherein the first through fourth portions are configured for transmission to the buyer in  
3 an integral transmission.

1 45. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable  
2 instructions for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for the purchase of a  
3 product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller, comprising:  
4 receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by  
5 buyers of the group;  
6 forming a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based  
7 upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;  
8 sending the collective request to the at least one seller;  
9 receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at  
10 least one seller;  
11 notifying an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation; and  
12 receiving purchase authorization from at least one buyer in the group to buy  
13 the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

1 46. The computer-readable medium of claim 45 wherein the agent entity  
2 is one of a buyer in the group or the group.

1 47. The computer-readable medium of claim 45, further comprising:  
2 collecting payment information for the at least one buyer in the group who  
3 is interested in buying the product/service at the received suggested price quotation; and  
4 sending the collected payment information to the at least one seller  
sending the collected payment information to the at least one seller.

10 providing payment information to the at least one seller if the group attains  
11 the at least one group size.

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1                   53.    The computer-readable medium of claim 52, further comprising:  
2                   requesting the at least one seller to honor the at least one of an agreed price  
3   for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for the at least one  
4   group size.

1                   54.    The computer-readable medium of claim 52, further comprising:  
2                   collecting payment information from buyers in the group who have  
3   submitted requests to purchase the product/service.

1                   55.    The computer-readable medium of claim 52 wherein the payment  
2   information is in the form of a credit card number for each buyer of the buyers in the  
3   group who are interested in buying the product/service.

56.   (Previously Presented) A system for facilitating a sales transaction for  
the purchase of a product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller,  
comprising:

a purchase request receiver configured to receive a request to purchase the  
product/service by at least one buyer of the group, and to restrict  
buyers in the group to buyers matching a predetermined  
requirements list that requires a plurality of buyers in the group to  
have a common employer, wherein the common employer is  
independent of the seller;

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- a collective request former configured to form a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based upon the received requests to purchase the product/service;
- a transmitter configured to send the collective request to the at least one seller;
- a price quotation receiver configured to receive a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller; and
- a price quotation notifier configured to notify an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation.

57. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the agent entity is at least one buyer in the group and wherein the price quotation notifier is further configured to receive purchase authorization from the at least one buyer in the group who is interested in buying the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

58. (Original) The system of claim 56, further comprising:

- a payment collector configured to collect payment information from the buyers in the group who are interested in buying the product /service at the received suggested price quotation and send the collected payment information to the at least one seller.

59. (Original) The system of claim 58 wherein the payment collector processes payment information in the form of a credit card number for the buyers in the group who are interested in buying the product/service.

60. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the price quotation notifier is further configured to notify the agent entity of a received another suggested price quotation if the price quotation receiver receives another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at least another seller.

63. The system of claim 62 wherein the requirements list includes as a requirement that more than one buyer in the group have a common employer.

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61. The system of claim 56, further comprising:  
a price quotation repository that allows at least another seller to review the received price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller.

62. The system of claim 56 wherein the purchase request receiver is further configured to restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

64. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the collective request former is further configured to form the collective request for the purchase of the product/service to include a price reduction request for the product/service based on a number of buyers in the group.

65. (Original) The system of claim 64 wherein the price reduction request further includes a preexisting group discount rate of the at least one seller.

66. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the collective request former includes a number of buyers in the group in the collective request.

67. (Original) The system of claim 56, further comprising:  
a setup tool configured to establish group buy setup characteristics data that includes at least one of price targets for the product/service, buyer deadlines for joining the group, buyer deadlines for receiving purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing the sales transaction.

68. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the purchase request receiver is connected to an electronic network and wherein the purchase request receiver receives requests to purchase the product/service over the electronic network.

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69. (Original) The system of claim 68 wherein the electronic network is at least one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

70. (Original) The system of claim 68 wherein the purchase request receiver is further configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service in a secured format.

71. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the price quotation receiver is connected to an electronic network and wherein the price quotation receiver receives suggested price quotations for the product/service over the electronic network.

72. (Original) The system of claim 56, further comprising:  
a purchase database configured to provide the buyers of the group with pre-negotiated prices for the product/service from the at least one seller.

73. (Original) The system of claim 56 wherein the price quotation notifier is further configured to notify at least one buyer in the group of the received suggested price quotation by preparing a message to the buyer in a format of at least one of an e-mail message, Internet immediate message, voice message, beeper message, and facsimile message.

74. (Previously Presented) A system for facilitating a sales transaction for the purchase of a product/service from a seller comprising:

- a memory configured to retain an agreed price for the product/service from a first seller or a price reduction for the product/service for a specific quantity of the product/service from the first seller;
- a communications interface configured to be used by an agent entity to automatically provide to a plurality of other sellers for review an agreed price for the product/service from the first seller or a price



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reduction for the product/service for a specific quantity of the product/service from the first seller, wherein the agent entity is independent of the sellers, wherein the memory is further configured to retain another suggested price quotation for the product/service from another seller of the plurality of other sellers; a price notifier configured to notify each of the buyers in the group of the another suggested price quotation;

a purchase request receiver configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service by buyers, the purchase request receiver configured to receive the requests to purchase the product/service after receiving the agreed price or the price reduction;

a group monitor configured to monitor the group to determine if the group has attained a pre-determined group size; and

a payment provider configured to provide payment information to the first seller if the group monitor indicates that the group has attained the pre-determined group size.

75. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 74, further comprising:

a sale manager configured to request the first seller to honor the at least one of an agreed price for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for the at least one group size.

76. (Original) The system of claim 74, further comprising:

a payment collector configured to collect payment information from buyers in the group who have submitted requests to purchase the product/service.

77. (Original) The method of claim 76 wherein the payment information is in the form of a credit card number for each buyer in the group who is interested in buying the product/service.

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1           78. The system of claim 74 wherein the memory is further configured to  
2 retain another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at least another  
3 seller, the system further comprising:  
4           a price notifier configured to notify each of the buyers in the group of the  
5 received another suggested price quotation.

1           79. The system of claim 74 wherein the memory is further configured to  
2 allow at least another seller to review the at least one of an agreed price for the  
3 product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size  
4 from the at least one seller.

80. (Original) The system of claim 74 in which the purchase request receiver is configured to restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

81. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 80 wherein the requirements list includes as a requirement that more than one buyer in the group have a common employer.

82. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 74, further comprising:  
a setup tool configured to provide a group buy setup characteristics data that includes at least one selected from the group consisting of: buyer deadlines for joining the group, buyer deadlines for receiving purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing the sales transaction.

83. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the purchase request receiver is connected to an electronic network and wherein the purchase request receiver is further configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service over the electronic network.

84. (Original) The system of claim 83 wherein the electronic network is at least one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

85. (Original) The system of claim 83 wherein the purchase request receiver is further configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service in a secured format.

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86. (Original) The system of claim 74 wherein the payment provider is connected to an electronic network and wherein the payment provider is further configured to provide the payment information to the at least one seller over the electronic network.

87. (Original) The system of claim 74, further comprising:  
a group-buying notifier configured to notify at least one buyer in the group that the group has attained the at least one group size.

88. (Original) The system of claim 87 wherein the at least one buyer is notified via at least one of an e-mail message, Internet immediate message, voice message, beeper message, and facsimile message.

89. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8 wherein verifying that buyers in the group satisfy a requirements list comprises:

determining that user names and passwords received from buyers match  
user names and passwords associated with the common employer  
in the requirements list.

90. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for purchasing a product/service by a group of buyers from a seller, comprising:

verifying that a plurality of buyers in the group share a common  
characteristic associated with a third party that is not any of the  
buyers or the seller;

receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service  
from verified buyers of the group;

forming a collective request for purchase of the product/service based

upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;

sending the collective request to the seller;

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receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the seller;  
automatically notifying an agent entity of the suggested price quotation received from the seller; and  
receiving purchase authorization from at least one verified buyer in the group to buy the product/service at the suggested price quotation received from the seller.

91. (Previously Presented) A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for purchasing a product/service from a seller, comprising:
- receiving from the seller a sales price for the product/service or a price reduction for the product/service for a specified group size;
  - receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by prospective buyers;
  - verifying that each prospective buyer satisfies a requirements list before including the prospective buyer in a buying group, the requirements list including a requirement that a plurality of buyers in the group share a common characteristic associated with a third party that is not any of the buyers or the seller;
  - monitoring the buying group to determine if the buying group has attained the specified group size; and
  - providing payment information to the seller if the group attains the specified group size.

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plurality of buyers in the group share a common characteristic associated with a third party that is not any of the buyers or the seller;

a request former configured to form a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based upon the received requests to purchase the product/service;

a transmitter configured to send the collective request to the seller;

a price receiver configured to receive a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the seller; and

a price notifier configured to automatically notify an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation.

92 (Previously Presented) A system for facilitating a sales transaction for the purchase of a product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller, comprising:

a purchase request receiver configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service by a buyer in the group, and to verify that a

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plurality of buyers in the group share a common characteristic associated with a third party that is not any of the buyers or the seller;

a request former configured to form a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based upon the received requests to purchase the product/service;

a transmitter configured to send the collective request to the seller;

a price receiver configured to receive a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the seller; and

a price notifier configured to automatically notify an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation.

(Original) The system of claim 56, further comprising:

a price quotation repository that allows at least another seller to review the received price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller.